



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**The Under Secretary of Commerce**  
**for Oceans and Atmosphere**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

MAY -6 2011

The Honorable Ralph M. Hall  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter dated March 15, 2011, regarding your interest in understanding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) current organizational structure for climate activities. I appreciate our recent discussions on NOAA's climate capabilities and proposal for a Climate Service Line Office during our December 2010 meeting and my fiscal year (FY) 2012 budget testimony before your committee.

While I realize that many people think of the very long term – centuries or more – when they hear the word 'climate,' the term refers to any time in the future beyond two weeks. NOAA's weather forecasts cover the short-term (less than two weeks); and our climate information covers anything beyond two weeks. NOAA has been providing information about both weather and climate for more than a century.

Hence, 'climate services' are not new. People around the country and the world use information about the climate to inform major decisions in such diverse areas as national defense, agriculture, and energy production. In recent decades, with advancements in our understanding of the climate, people are using information at finer geographic and time scales to make smarter choices at home and in their communities and businesses. This comes at a time when up to one-third of the U.S. gross domestic product is dependent on weather and climate.

NOAA's climate information – including long-range forecasts of conditions from two weeks to seasons or decades out – continues to be at the forefront of this improved decision making. Our climate capabilities have significantly matured and grown in sophistication as a result of the work of the agency's world-class scientists, managers, and external partners. For example, NOAA's climate forecasts, from seasonal precipitation and drought outlooks to weekly on-the-ground U.S. Drought Monitor assessments, are helping firefighters in Texas to prepare for and respond to a record wildfire season. NOAA's information is also being used by the U.S. home building industry, which estimates savings of over \$300 million per year in construction costs alone from using just one of NOAA's climate services.

THE ADMINISTRATOR



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Americans who have come to depend on this long-range information are now demanding more data and increasingly complex products that, in turn, require advanced scientific study. In order to better organize NOAA to respond to these needs, experts have proposed creating a formal "climate service" within the agency. This concept first surfaced in the early 1970s and later gained prominence in the George W. Bush Administration. NOAA and external groups have been engaged in efforts ever since to further develop this idea and improve climate science and services.

Before advancing this proposal, NOAA staff worked for nearly a decade, and continue to work, in a cross-Line Office "goal team" to better coordinate the climate capabilities distributed across the agency's five Line Offices and achieve the long-term climate science and service goals of NOAA's strategic plan. At the same time, NOAA's expert scientists and managers from across the agency, as well as external experts, analyzed our current organizational structure and evaluated options for further improvement. Chief among these external advisers was a National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) expert panel that, at Congress' request, completed a study of options for a Climate Service in NOAA. The unanimous conclusion of internal and external scientists and decision makers was that establishing a single management structure for the agency's core climate capabilities is required if the agency is to rise to meet the Nation's growing need for increasingly sophisticated information.

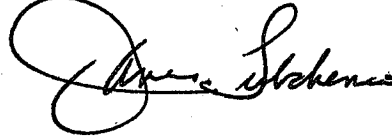
I believe strongly that our proposed reorganization, reflecting this management structure and submitted as part of NOAA's FY 2012 budget request to Congress, is the right solution. It is budget neutral and comes at no additional cost to the taxpayer. In fact, by consolidating NOAA's climate activities in one Line Office we will be able to operate more efficiently with the funds we receive, provide the public with a single point of access to NOAA's climate data and tools, and better support the growth of the emerging private sector climate services industry. Together, this will allow NOAA to more effectively respond to the Nation's increasing demands for climate information.

Our proposal also maintains the highest standards of scientific integrity for all NOAA science and strategically renews the Office of Atmospheric Research's (OAR) forward-looking research agenda. In proposing to house much of OAR's climate research in the proposed Climate Service Line Office, a structure strongly endorsed by NAPA, NOAA will both be able to better transition its high quality climate science into usable services and seize upon the opportunity to refocus OAR's efforts to incubate solutions to tomorrow's long-term science challenges, integrate an agency-wide science portfolio, and drive NOAA science and technology innovation. Of critical importance is the fact that none of NOAA's climate or other research capabilities are diminished by this proposed reorganization, and we do not anticipate any marked change to the balance of internal vs. extramural funding, pending appropriations.

Enclosed you will find a set of documents compiled by my staff to assist your understanding of: 1) NOAA's current organizational structure for climate-related activities, and 2) the planning we have undertaken to develop our reorganization proposal. NOAA has not made changes to its organizational structure to establish or implement a Climate Service Line Office in the absence of Congressional approval.

I appreciate your ongoing interest and support of NOAA, and would be happy to meet with you at your convenience to further discuss these issues. If you have any questions or would like to meet, please contact John Gray, Director of NOAA's Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 482-4981.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Lubchenco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "L".

Jane Lubchenco, PhD.  
Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere

Enclosures